Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE

BELFAST MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

No. 10.] MAY 31, 1809. [Vol. 2.

The Proprietors of the BELFAST MAGAZINE, *to prevent any misapprehension in future, and to afford full scope to free discussion, give notice to their Readers, that the* EDITOR *is not accountable in his official character for any article which may appear in this Magazine, whether relating to Politics, Theology, Science, or Taste, unless he himself be the writer of that article. It is the established rule among the Proprietors and the Editor, that each is accountable for what he may respectively communicate, agreeably to the principles which they have already laid down in their Introductory Paper. Contributions furnished by Correspondents, are, in cases of doubt, ultimately decided on at the general meetings of the Proprietors.*

COMMUNICATIONS, ORIGINAL AND SELECTED.

To the Editor of the Belfast Magazine.

ON NATIONAL SCHOOLS.

SIR,

I HAVE observed, with pleasure, the particular attention you pay to every thing relative to Education. The proposal of Simplex, in your last but one, is of this kind, and from its great importance, and extreme utility, if put into practice, deserves particular notice.

His plan of generalising Education, by bringing it home to the door of every person in the kingdom, at a small expense, either to the government or the people, would be of the most essential service, and in all probability tend as much to conciliate the minds of the lower classes to the government, as any other measure recommended for that purpose. It will be worth while inquiring more particularly, how far the plan he has adopted for effecting this desirable purpose is practicable, and what prospect of success we may reasonably flatter ourselves will accrue from its adoption.

The peculiar advantages of this scheme seem to be its extent, and cheapness. As to the first, its excellence is indisputable; Ireland contains 2436 parishes; if four schools were established in each of these, their number would amount to 9744, which, at the rate of 36 pupils to each (the number specified in the plan) would supply the means of instruction to 351,284 children. The number of inhabitants of Ireland is computed to be 5½ millions. Of this number it may be fairly supposed that five millions are of that class who would wish to profit by such schools. I am not sufficiently versed in economics, to determine the proportion of this number that would be of an age to receive instruction, but if I might be allowed to guess from a very slender knowledge, the number of males from eight to fourteen years of age, which includes the time from which public instruction usually commences, until they are of an age to assist their parents in the works of the field, or manufactures, would not be more than one tenth of the male population, or 250,000, whence it appears that this scheme provides means of education for more than what could take advantage of it. If, however, as I am inclined to think was the case, the writer included the female as well as male population in his calculations, the number to be educated must be doubled, and the means of instruction will then be found in some degree inadequate. But at the same time it is evident that it may easily be enlarged, at a trifling additional cost.

The expense of maintaining this establishment comes next to be considered. The sum mentioned is 120,000*l.* which, even by the writer's concessions will be found insufficient. He allows fifty pounds per annum to be granted by parliament to each parish, for supporting schoolmasters. This alone, makes a sum of 121,800*l.* But as it is to be supposed that a few parishes will

prefer a smaller number, the parliamentary grant may be supposed adequate to cover this expense. But it is said that the parish must also provide a small sum to defray contingent expenses. Money given for a public purpose is a tax, let it be drawn from the people as it may. It matters little whether it be immediately transferred from the pocket of the land holder to the person who is to be supported by it, or arrive at the same destination by the more circuitous course of revenue officers and clerks of the treasury. The only difference is, that in the former case, having a shorter course to run, and meeting with fewer points of contact in its passage, it will be less liable to diminution. This additional sum, which must be taken into the account, is not named in the sketch, but cannot be fixed at less than two pounds for each school, or eight for each parish, making in all an increase of 19,488*l.* To this must also be added, the salaries of thirty-two county visitors. Each of these will have the superintendance of 304 schools; they are to be paid at the rate of 75*l.* for every hundred schools (which allowance will be found insufficient, as I shall prove hereafter) making their yearly salary 225*l.* each, or in all 7,100*l.*

To this must also be added the salary for the agent to the supreme committee, and an allowance for incidental expenses attending the communication between the several branches of this system.

The expenses will stand, according to the foregoing statement, nearly as follows:

Parliamentary grant . . .	120,000
Parochial grant	19,488
Visitors' salaries	7,100
Agents' salary, say . . .	400
Incidental expenses, say	500
	£147,488

In the first year the expenses will be more than doubled; for in addition to all the payments in the foregoing table, the building of school-houses must be taken into consideration. To defray this, the writer supposes a grant of 50*l.* from the public, and 12*l.* 10*s.* from each parish will be sufficient. I am inclined to differ with him. The building of each school would cost 30*l.* at the least, that is 120*l.* for each parish. And though in some, houses are already provided, yet as he supposes, that in such cases the money granted for building schools is to be appropriated for providing dwelling houses for the teachers, nothing is to be deducted on that account. But even by his own calculation the expenses of the first year will stand as follows:

Parliamentary grant for building	121,800
Parochial grant for do. .	30,450
Salaries, as per table. . .	147,488
	£299,738

The foregoing statements are not made with a view of raising difficulties to a plan, the intention of which is so excellent, and the general outline so feasible; on the contrary, it will be found that incorrect estimates have a much greater effect in stifling a public undertaking. For, on entering into the details, an unexpected difficulty arises in providing funds for the increased expenditure, and also raises a suspicion that there is something unsound in the whole fabric, when a defect has been detected in a particular part. By taking a survey of the whole expenditure at first, we are prepared to arrange our plans on an enlarged basis. But though I have shown, that in the execution of this plan, an annual expense would be incurred, much heavier than was at first alleged; this should not prevent its being attended to. We see sums of ten times the amount annually spent either on subsidizing foreign princes, to fight their own battles as long as it suits their interest or convenience, or in sending out ineffectual military expeditions. Were the expenses of educating our infant population equal to those incurred by sending 30,000 men on a three month's ramble through the south of Europe, it is still to be considered, that in the former case, the money advanced by the people is spent in the country, and therefore reverts by other channels to the source whence it originally sprung; while in the latter it is not only lost to us, but serves to augment the resources of our enemies. Besides, a fund already presents itself for supplying a great part

of the sum to be annually raised. Were this scheme to be put in execution, the charter-schools would be useless. The great revenue accruing thence presents itself immediately to be applied to a more beneficial, because a more national and unprejudiced purpose. I am not prepared to state the amount of the revenues of these schools, but from a calculation of their probable expenses a very fair conjecture may be formed, as it is well known, that these are much within the revenues. The average of children in each of the thirty-two charter-schools, is 60, making a total of 1,920. The expenses of feeding and clothing those cannot be estimated at less than 10*l.* each, annually. The salaries of masters, mistresses, and ushers at each school must be 50*l.* and the repairs and incidental expenses of the large buildings in which the schools are kept, may be fairly reckoned at 20*l.* more. The account then will stand thus:

Feeding and clothing the children	19,200
Masters, &c. in 32 schools	750
Incidental expenses	640
	£20,590

Besides the schools here enumerated, there are four provincial nurseries, and two private establishments, under the management of the Governors of the Incorporated Society; the expenses of which, added to the above, may be supposed to raise it to 30,000*l.* annually. Hence, therefore, if the charter-schools, the benefits of which even at present are not adequate to their expenses, and which would, in case of the substitution of parochial schools, be useless, were abolished, the sum arising from them would more than defray the additional expenses of the national system, and verify the words of its author, "that its establishment would not require more than 120,000*l.* per annum additional to be added to the public burdens."

I shall now proceed to take a view of the internal regulations. The first that occurs relates to the masters; they are allowed ten guineas for the education of ten free scholars, and as the number of their pupils is confined to thirty-six, they have besides this the profits of twenty-six pupils, which being estimated at 1*l.* probably the very highest average would make their annual income about 36*l.* This is but a small compensation for a very laborious, and in some degree unhealthy occupation. However it may be augmented in some degree. The number of their pupils is limited to thirty-six, and very probably it is sufficient for one man. In the charter-schools, attention is paid to procure married men, whose wives may be capable of performing some part of the duty. Were the same plan adopted here, the best effects would be produced. A married man is bound by stronger ties to good conduct and regularity. He has an additional motive for exertion. His wife, by taking part in the office of instructing, as is done in every country town with the younger part of the children, who are always, and probably most advantageously placed under the care of females, will enable him to receive a larger number, say ten more, and thus augment his income proportionably. To these we may add, that when such an opportunity is held out for young women to reap a certain benefit from their education, it will be a new stimulus to application, marriage will be encouraged by the prospect of finding a wife an assistant, instead of an incumbrance, and the additional number thus educated, amounting to nearly 200,000, will, without any additional expense to the nation, provide the means of educating the greatest part of the surplus, which, as I proved in the beginning of this paper, would otherwise remain uneducated, if we suppose that females are to participate in the benefits of the system.

The course of education naturally presenting itself, consists of reading, writing, and accounts. As to the Christian duties, I doubt very much whether the teachers can be expected to possess the necessary qualifications for being impartial expounders of the sacred volume. Let the Scriptures, or select parts of them be read, and let the masters set the example, and enforce the observance of the great practical duties of Christianity, and they have done enough. The doctrine is best entrusted to the spiritual teachers already existing, who are well paid

for this neglected part of their duty. In every parish in the kingdom there is (or ought to be) at least two resident clergymen, a Protestant and a Catholic; in most of the Northern districts, which in general are the most populous, there are three. These, if they have the inclination, are fully adequate to the duty.

The controlling powers appear to be well arranged and to arise from the lower to the higher degrees in a very regular order. The theory looks well, but I fear for the practice. Let us examine each of them separately. The first or more immediate is the parochial committee, to consist of the clergymen of the parish, together with six others chosen at vestry. Let us judge of what will be, by what is. In the charter schools, which I look upon as the best precedents to imitate in some points and to deviate from in others, a similar inspecting power is vested in a local committee appointed by the society and consisting of some of the respectable persons, residents in the neighbourhood, and generally, if not always the clergymen of the adjoining parishes. Yet it is well known that several of the charter schools exhibit the most glaring marks of negligence and internal mismanagement. Nor is this to be attributed to innatention in the governors. They are not only willing to hear, but anxious to receive information; reports are regularly sent up signed by one or more of the local committee. Whence then can it originate? I will tell what came almost under my own personal knowledge. One of the country charter houses was entrusted to a master and mistress, who so far from being possessed of any of the qualities requisite for such a place, would scarcely have been admitted as menial servants into a respectable family. They were idle, vicious, and drunken. Their misconduct at length reached the ears of the governors. The master became alarmed; and in order to silence the unfavourable reports which had reached his superiors, and secure himself in his place he applied to the local committee, several of whom signed a certificate in testimony of his good conduct and attention to the morals, improvement, and health of the children. Yet so notorious was his character that in spite of this testimonial he was displaced. I mention this to prove the little reliance to be placed on the spirit or exertions of those who are not incited by their private interest. Another instance will prove that indolence and apathy to what does not immediately come home to self is an obstacle equally general and as difficult to be removed. When it was proposed to publish statistical accounts of the several counties of Ireland, a work which could only be brought to perfection by the concurrent exertions of every intelligent man throughout the kingdom, and which, if properly executed, would ultimately benefit the country gentlemen and farmers most essentially, several of the persons who undertook this laborious and novel work wrote circular letters to all the respectable persons through the country, proposing questions relative to its natural and agricultural state, and we are informed by the writers themselves, that these applications were totally neglected. Perhaps, however, in the present instance, the election at vestry may have better effect. The choice will fall on the respectable farmers, who, living in a state of independence, produced by labour, possess at least nine tenths of the real public spirit of the country; such men as these being as it were the representatives of their neighbours, to whom they will feel themselves responsible at the rigid bar of public opinion, may be unaffected by the passions that instigate the more affluent, and what are falsely called the more independent classes.

The county visitors come next to be considered. Their duty, if properly executed, is very weighty, and attended with a high degree of responsibility. I have already shown that they have the superintendance of three hundred schools. If they visit four of these every day, which would be enough, probably too much for one man to do with proper minuteness, they will be able to go round the county but three times in a year. But it may be said that they are intended rather to controul the local committees, than to inspect minutely into the schools. To this I answer, if so, their appointment is

nugatory. They cannot know the relative situations of the schools and committees, unless they examine the schools. It must also be recollected that the committees being voluntary agents, will not submit to the absolute controul of persons nominated and paid by the higher powers. With them, the powers of the visitor can extend no farther than to recommend and advise: with the schoolmasters, their duty is to examine and report. It will be found that this process of examination and reporting, together with the listening to the reports of the local committees, investigating their correctness, and applying remedies to petty abuses and mistakes, which could not come before the supreme committee, will be as much as any one man of good sense, sound constitution, and great perseverance can possibly effect. The salary, also, as I have already hinted, is insufficient. If a man of education and abilities devotes his whole time to one object, he must be paid in proportion; and it must be observed that a fixed salary, as it precludes the hope of increase, ought to be greater than that which varies with the merits of the person employed. The visitor must also be provided with a horse, and pass most of his time at inns, which besides the great expense, will entail the necessity of a double establishment, if he has a family. A brigade major of yeomanry is allowed a guinea a day, yet he remains nearly one half of his time at home, which, however, is fully occupied in making up his returns, and while on his progress, is at little expense, as he is always a guest at some of those gentlemen's houses, whose corps come under his inspection. The county visitor has a much more tedious and constant employment, and cannot hope for the same kind of reception at his different stages. I am not a friend to the too liberal expenditure of public money, but, at the same time, am clearly of opinion, that to have the public business well done, the public servants must be well paid. I would therefore propose that the county should be divided into two districts, over each of which a visitor should be appointed; also, that their salaries should be not less than 300*l.* subject, however to the regulation mentioned by the writer as to the masters, that the supreme committee should have the power of diminishing this in case of inattention or misconduct, and making a fund of the balance thus formed for the reward of superior exertions. The usual method of treating public functionaries, has always appeared to me to be very exceptionable. There is no gradation either of rewards or punishments. Superior talent or exertion meets with no extraordinary recompense; and the only punishment for all offences is deprivation. In the former case, emulation is exstinguished, the latter counteracts itself. In most cases of delinquency, the punishment appears excessive; justice, compassion, friendship, and in many cases interest, prevent its taking effect. Thus, what once was crime, degenerates into custom, and the public affairs decline from bad to worse, without any remedy against the ever increasing abuses which can every day advance a stronger plea of accumulating precedents in their favour.

The last point to be considered is the supreme committee. Two reasons seem to have influenced the proposer of this plan to lodge the ultimate controul in the hands of the heads of the clergy of the three leading persuasions, to prevent the preponderancy of any one sect, and to take the patronage out of the hands of the ministry. With respect to the first of these, the weight of influence seems to be very unequally divided. The Protestant bishop, who constitutes apparently but a third part of this triumvirate would carry along with him all the influence of the ministry and established clergy; while the Moderator of the Synod being changed every year, and possessing no influence but what derives to him from his temporary ecclesiastical character, could never cope in case of a difference of opinion with his permanent authorised coadjutor. This junction, instead of producing the harmony of an engine, whose parts were equally balanced, would resemble the attraction of the sun, earth and moon, in which the one would assume the centre, and sit quietly at his ease, while he forced the other two to revolve in the orbits which he had tracked out for them. As

to the attempt to exclude the interference of the ministry, or to remove the system one step farther from its immediate influence, by the intervention of the supreme triumvirate (I agree with the writer, notwithstanding) we may both in consequence of the opinion be suspected of improper motives, that it is a consummation devoutly to be wished. I know that it is an acknowledged principle, that education is a national concern, and therefore should be under the regulation of the government. If by the *government* be meant the *legislature*, consisting of the KING, the NOBILITY, and the PEOPLE *fairly and fully represented by delegates chosen really by themselves*, I heartily acquiesce in the justice of the maxim: but if this word is meant to express the persons delegated by the king to do his business in the house of commons, the ministers of the day, I confess I see little good likely to result from a scheme, the supreme controul of which is guided by such a fluctuating ephemeral regulator. I see nothing but a new system of new places, pensions, sinecures and influence, extending its ramifications from a triple stem, into every hamlet and cottage in the empire.

The part of the plan relating to the supreme committee or triumvirate seems strongly liable to objection on the grounds just stated.—But though it is far from meeting my approbation, I know of nothing to be substituted in its stead. What I have said, however, not only concerning this branch, but the whole plan, may attract greater attention towards it; if so, it will be found not to be the fanciful theory which I believe it is at present thought.—The rudiments of an excellent system lie involved in it: but much care, and time, and perseverance would be requisite for their extrication. Lancaster has turned the minds of every economical philosopher to the subject of general education. The assertion I am about to make will be deemed a paradox, yet I will not hesitate to declare it. The plan now proposed, or something like it will be found much more practicable, and generally beneficial, than that which has justly been the subject of so much praise and imitation. To carry the one into effect, the abilities of the founder of the system are requisite in every master; in the other ordinary capacity is sufficient: it will be much easier to find 8000 schoolmasters of the latter kind than 80 of the former.

The subject could be dwelt on with much advantage, and many useful hints been drawn from it, for private persons or single parishes to put in practice on a smaller scale, but, I fear, will never be heartily undertaken by the military financial politicians of the present day, the main object of whose administration seems to be to raise money to carry on war, and to carry on war to raise money.

Wishing every success to a scheme for the improvement of my countrymen, I remain, sir, yours,

QUINCTIUS.

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

ON THE EARLY PLANTING OF POTATOES.

I OBSERVE two of your Correspondents who have written on this subject, have not yet agreed in the accuracy of the statement of expense in the two modes, of the lazy-bed and drill culture. It is not my intention to interfere in this part of the discussion, but I may be allowed to remark that I entirely agree with the assertion of William Gooch, that the lazy bed culture is often preferable, when the palate, and I add the quality as wholesome food are consulted.

But my motive for writing at present is principally to recommend the planting of potatoes in either mode at an early period of the season. Potatoes planted at a late period are seldom as firm and good as those planted more early: and yet the practice of late setting has for several years been gradually increasing. Quality is thus sacrificed to quantity. To those who raise potatoes for their own use, little reasoning is necessary to show that the calculation is a mistaken one, as potatoes of an inferior quality are not profitable, but occasion great waste in the use of them, by the worst of them being thrown